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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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ST. THOMAS AND THE CAUSALITY OF GOD'S GOODNESS

Lawrence DEWAN

IF ONE were asked to indicate the most famous passage in Plato's writings, surely the pages in the *Republic*¹ on the Idea of the Good as cause of the very being of the intelligible order would be an obvious choice. It is remarkable, then, that Aristotle, speaking of his predecessors' (including Plato's) knowledge of the types of cause, has this to say:

That for whose sake actions and changes and movements take place, they assert to be a cause in a way, but not in this way, i.e. not in the way in which it is its *nature* to be a cause. For those who speak of reason or friendship class these causes as goods; they do not speak, however, as if anything that exists either existed or came into being for the sake of these, but as if movements started from these. In the same way those who say the One or the existent is the good, say that this is the cause of substance, but not that substance either is or comes to be for the sake of this. Therefore it turns out that in a sense they both say and do not say the good is a cause; for they do not call it a cause *qua* good but only incidentally².

The casual reader of the *Republic*, considering the comparison which Plato makes between the sun as cause of visibility, sight, growth, etc., and the Idea of the Good as supreme cause, might easily be led to think that Aristotle is adequately describing the situation, i.e. that Plato conceived of the Good as an efficient cause ("... as if movements started from these"). But close reading of the text of Plato, along with a little reflection on Plato's doctrine, should actually increase our perplexity about Aristotle's statement.

1. VI, 508-509.

2. *Metaph.*, A, 7: 988 b 6-16 (Ross transl., his italics).

While it is clear that "cause" in English has at least the two meanings: "that whence a movement starts" ("cause of death: a bullet") and "that for whose sake actions and changes and movements take place" ("he gave his life for the cause"), it is of interest to note that etymologically the Latin "*causa*" seems to have its origin in the direction of "that for the sake of which", i.e. "that which is defended or protected"; cf. C. T. LEWIS and C. SHORT, *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, 1879 (1962 reprint): Clarendon Press, *ad loc.*, and at "*caveo*".

A primary characteristic of Plato's doctrine is the effort to isolate pure intelligibilities. And this characteristic is very apparent in his presentation of the study of the Idea of the Good as the greatest study. He tells us that the good is "what every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does everything."³ While it is true that Plato's image of the sun suggests efficiency, nevertheless the realm of intelligibilities, about which Plato actually is speaking, has its own peculiar kind of priority and posteriority:

...using forms themselves, going through forms to forms, it ends in forms too⁴.

He is aiming to speak of the very principle of causal order, in its pure intelligibility: "to reach what is free from hypothesis at the beginning of the whole"⁵. And this is the Good:

... in the knowable the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort, is the *idea* of the good; but once seen, it must be concluded that this is in fact the cause of all that is right and fair in everything — in the visible it gave birth to light and its sovereign; in the intelligible, itself sovereign, it provided truth and intelligence..."⁶

One should not be fooled by "gave birth" and "provided". Plato is speaking about the ultimate intelligibility of "cause", and it is no accident that he hits on the word: "good" to describe it.

If Plato might reasonably be suspected of missing anything by this approach, it would more likely be the *association* of efficiency and finality. His method lends itself to the isolation of pure intelligibilities. "Suppose there were a good which was *only* good...", we might imagine him saying⁷. In fact, however, such suspicion is not only groundless but actually contradicted by the text of the *Phaedo*, if any doubt really remains after reading the passages in the *Republic*. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates tells of his youthful eagerness to know the causes:

I thought it was a glorious thing to know the causes of everything, why each thing comes into being and why it perishes and why it exists...⁸

And he recounts his delight at first hearing of Anaxagoras' doctrine "that it is mind which arranges and causes all things". This seemed "somehow right"⁹. Here is how he understood the causality of mind:

3. *Republic* VI, 505d, transl. A. Bloom (*The Republic of Plato*, New York/London, 1968: Basic Books). All *Republic* quotations herein are from this translation.

Cf. 505a-e, to see how Plato is insisting on the vision of the very goodness of the good.

4. *Ibid.*, 511c.

5. *Ibid.*, 511b.

6. *Ibid.*, VII, 517b-c.

7. Cf. e.g. *Parmenides*, 159b-c.

8. *Phaedo*, 96a-b, transl. H.N. Fowler (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass./London, 1914: Harvard/W. Heinemann). All *Phaedo* passages are Fowler's transl.

9. *Ibid.*, 97b-c.

For I never imagined that, when he said they were ordered by intelligence, he would introduce *any other cause* for these things *than that it is best for them to be as they are*¹⁰.

Intelligence is seen as an agent, as acting, on the basis of its choice of what is best:

But to say... that I act with intelligence but not from the choice of what is best, would be an extremely careless way of talking¹¹.

Intelligence is here conceived as looking towards what is already given somehow, and given with the status of "best".

The cause of the universe is "the good, which must embrace and hold together all things"¹². It is true that once again the language of efficiency is used here to describe or suggest the causality of the good, but to maintain that it is literally meant would, it seems to me, amount to accusing Plato of committing the very error he is denouncing.

Taking the *Republic* and the *Phaedo* together, one can say that Plato both isolated for consideration the origin of all production, "that for the sake of which" or the good, and saw it in its association with mind or soul, which precisely as mind or soul does whatever it does for the sake of the best.

Why Aristotle spoke as he did is a problem. Perhaps he merely means that Plato was not explicit enough in distinguishing meanings of the word: "cause". There is certainly a permanent problem as to how to present the respective roles of the final and efficient causes, or the good and the agent. In this present paper we wish to show how St. Thomas Aquinas handled the association of these notions when speaking of God as creator of the universe.

This topic was discussed many years ago by Fr. J. Peghaire, in a paper on St. Thomas's interpretation of the maxim: *bonum est diffusivum sui*, i.e. *the good diffuses itself*¹³. Fr. Peghaire actually began his paper with a survey of the Platonic tradition, beginning with Plato's *Timaeus*. Concerning the question: why does the Demiurge or Craftsman¹⁴ make the world, Fr. Peghaire notes that Plato's answer was:

He was good; and in the good no jealousy in any matter can ever arise. So, being without jealousy, he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself¹⁵.

In this, Fr. Peghaire saw the doctrine of the good as self-diffusive¹⁶. He also saw *efficient* causality as the mode of causality involved. He took this from the fact that

10. *Ibid.*, 98a.

11. *Ibid.*, 99b.

12. *Ibid.*, 99c.

13. J. PEGHAIRE, C.S.Sp., "L'axiome 'Bonum est diffusivum sui' dans le néo-platonisme et le thomisme", *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* (1932), Section spéciale, vol. 1, pp. 5*-30*.

14. We will use the English word, since it is clear that no human agency is meant.

15. *Timaeus*, 29^c, F.M. Cornford transl. here and in the later citations (from *Plato's Cosmology*, New York, 1957: Liberal Arts Press). Cf. Peghaire, p. 8*.

16. PEGHAIRE, p. 9*. He puts it in the form of a question, but it seems rhetorical.

Plato's Craftsman is seen as bringing all that is visible "from disorder to order": and in this, says Fr. Peghaire, "there is no question of any final causality"¹⁷. And yet the very passage in which he finds only efficient causality reads:

*Desiring, then, that all things should be good and, so far as might be, nothing imperfect, the god took over all that is visible — not at rest, but in discordant and unordered motion — and brought it from disorder into order, since he judged that order was in every way the better*¹⁸.

One can only wonder at such readiness to turn away from such clear references to final causality.

The phenomenon is all the more surprising when one considers that Fr. Peghaire was writing a paper on the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas, faced with a task similar to that just accomplished for us by Fr. Peghaire, made quite a different judgment. St. Thomas, having been asked to explain St. Augustine's saying: "Because God is good, we exist" (and asked this by someone who maintained that the saying made of the good *qua* good an efficient cause), carefully explained how it was to be traced to *final* causality¹⁹.

Fr. Peghaire went on to argue that the neo-Platonists held the doctrine that the good *qua* good is an efficient cause. He further noted that St. Thomas seemed little inclined to quote the maxim "*Bonum est diffusivum sui*" on his own account, and that when he did interpret it, he most emphatically interpreted it as expressive of *final* causality. Peghaire also pointed to a passage in St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Metaphysics*²⁰ (actually commenting on the statement of Aristotle which we quoted at the outset) where St. Thomas notes two ways of speaking of the causality of the good, the one focussing on final causality, the other focussing on efficient causality, and where St. Thomas qualifies the second way of speaking as *per accidens*, i.e. as happening to speak of what is in fact good, but saying something else about it. Peghaire uses this mention of two ways of speaking to explain the (to Peghaire) anomaly he finds in *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 1, a. 1, where St. Thomas uses the doctrine, if not quite the maxim, of the self-diffusion of the good (taken, as Peghaire sees it, in the sense of *efficient* causality) to explain the appropriateness of the Incarnation. He argues that St. Thomas must be speaking there according to the second way. Peghaire is forced into this position (1) because the article in question seems to him so clearly to have to do with efficiency, production, and (2) because St. Thomas can hardly have been led, at the end of his life, to change his mind on something so basic as the causality of the good as such²¹.

Cornford, *op. cit.*, p. 34, criticizes A.E. Taylor for reading later theology into Plato, concerning the "overflow" of the good. However, quite apart from the question of the ontological status of the Craftsman, Plato is certainly aiming to enunciate some universally recognizable reason for the Craftsman's action. It is quite in order to say he is touching on the doctrine of the primacy of the good in causality.

17. PEGHAIRE, p. 9*: "De causalité finale, il n'est pas question."

18. *Timaeus*, 30a; our italics. Cf. 29a.

19. Cf. *below*, p. 304.

20. *In Metaph.*, lib. I, lect. xi (ed. Cathala, #177-9).

21. PEGHAIRE, p. 24*.

Fr. Peghaire does not seem to have considered that his position amounts to saying that St. Thomas's first statement on the Incarnation, so obviously fundamental, is an instance of St. Thomas speaking in a way Peghaire himself had previously characterized as "purely accidental"²². In this case of all cases, St. Thomas is supposed to be acting at variance with the saying quoted by Peghaire himself: "St. Thomas always speaks most formally"²³.

In fact, the article by Fr. Peghaire was far too simple for the subject it undertook to discuss. For one thing, its approach in function of the maxim: "the good diffuses itself" is unsatisfactory; for if it is true that St. Thomas himself rarely makes use of it (and might not this be for the very reason that it is not to be found verbatim in the text of the authority to whom it is referred, viz the pseudo-Dionysius²⁴?), it is nevertheless true that the doctrine itself is one he makes very much his own²⁵. Consider that Fr. Peghaire himself recognizes its presence in *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1, where what St. Thomas actually says is: "it pertains to the notion of the good that it communicate itself to others..."²⁶ Consider further that Fr. Peghaire was obliged to add in a footnote reference to another "anomalous" text which he had not noticed when he wrote his article, viz *ST* I, q. 19, a. 2, where St. Thomas says: "... if natural things, to the extent that they are perfect, communicate their good to others, much more does it pertain to the divine will that it communicate its good to others by likeness, according as this is possible."²⁷ Thus, Fr. Peghaire himself recognized that in such passages, where the language is different, the doctrine is the same. But one can find many other instances of this same language, not noted by Fr. Peghaire because of his focus on the maxim. In one place we read: "... it is appropriate to the end that it be communicated according to every possible mode"²⁸. And again: "... the communication of perfections, absolutely considered, pertains to goodness..."²⁹ And again:

22. *Ibid.*, "... purement accidentelle..." actually occurs in the text quoted from St. Thomas; it is Fr. Peghaire's rendering of "*per accidens*".

23. *Ibid.*, p. 25*.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 6*.

25. A much more accurate statement of the role of the doctrine for St. Thomas is to be found in J.-P. Jossua, "L'axiome 'bonum diffusivum sui' chez s. Thomas d'Aquin", *Revue des sciences religieuses* 40 (1966), pp. 127-153.

In criticizing the paper of Fr. Peghaire, we make no judgment about his views concerning the true teaching of the neo-Platonists. He argues that in their doctrine the causality of the good as such is efficient. There is also a final causality, i.e. once the effect is produced it turns towards the good and acts to attain the good. Cf. p. 13* (Plotinus), p. 15* (Proclus), pp. 18*-19* (pseudo-Dionysius). But he seems to argue on his own account that final causality cannot have to do with the origin of things: "Or parler d'origine, c'est, sinon parler de causalité efficiente au sens aristotélicien du mot, du moins se tenir au commencement de l'être, c'est-à-dire à l'opposé de la causalité finale qui, elle, suppose l'être déjà existant pour l'attirer vers elle." (p. 12*) If this were true, how could final causality ever enter into the explanation of the coming to be of things? And this opinion seems to be the basis for Fr. Peghaire's presentation of the neo-Platonists.

26. Henceforth "*ST*" for "*Summa theologiae*".

27. PEGHAIRE, p. 20*, n. 48. He says he finds in this a very clear echo of Plotinus, meaning presumably a reference to the efficient causality of the good; that is why he mentions it along with the other texts he finds difficult to reconcile with St. Thomas's general position.

28. *De potentia*, q. 2, a. 1, *ad* 14.

29. *ST* I, q. 21, a. 3.

... that which we call 'goodness' in creatures pre-exists in God, and that in a higher way. Hence, from this it does not follow that 'to be good' belongs to God inasmuch as he causes goodness; but rather conversely, because he is good, he pours out [*diffundit*] goodness into things, in accordance with the statement of Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*: 'Inasmuch as he is good, we exist'³⁰.

But these texts are merely the tip of the iceberg. The main objection to Fr. Peghaire's treatment is that it takes no notice of *ST* I, q. 6, St. Thomas's own presentation of God as good. Consider the first article of that text: whether 'to be good' belongs to God. St. Thomas, in affirming that God is good, uses as middle term of the demonstration God's being the first *efficient* cause of all; and in so doing he invokes the authority of the pseudo-Dionysius:

... [who] attributed 'good' to God as to the first efficient cause...

Again, in the second article, that God is the *supreme* good, St. Thomas argues affirmatively on the basis of God as *agent*, i.e. as efficient cause.

Does St. Thomas, then, affirm throughout his career the efficient causality of the good as such? Not at all. Fr. Peghaire was quite right in maintaining that St. Thomas's doctrine is that of the good as final cause. What his paper fails to bring out is the subtlety of the situation which this expresses. The subtlety of the situation is seen in the actual application of the doctrine by St. Thomas. Once this is understood, one can see that *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1 is no anomaly and affirms once more the doctrine of the fruitfulness of the good as final cause.

Let us, then, examine St. Thomas's thought in *ST* I, qq. 5 and 6, on the goodness of God, with a view to seeing this actual application of the doctrine of the primacy of the final cause.

"Something Good"

Before discussing the goodness of God, St. Thomas devotes a question of the *Summa* to the general nature of goodness, and we will look first at that question. As is well known, St. Thomas teaches that "a being" (*ens*) and "something good" (*bonum*) name the same *thing*, and differ only "in notion" (*secundum rationem*). And here, "name the same thing" does not mean something like "hand" and "foot" naming the same thing because they name diverse parts of one man; rather, it is like two words naming the same hand. Of *whatever* thing "a being" is said, "something good" is said. But "something good" adds a notion which "a being" does not express, namely a relation to appetite or inclination.

The result of this addition of the notion of relation to appetite, in our discourse about things, is to demand a different road-map for the application of the word:

30. *Ibid.*, q. 13, a. 2. As here we have "*diffundit*", clearly an echo of the axiom, so also at *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 3, we read: "that his goodness, which cannot be multiplied in its very essence, be poured forth [*effundatur*] into many, at least by participation of likeness." Cf. also below, n. 34.

"something good", different, that is, from the map used for the application of "a being". Each of the words is said of everything whatsoever, but each is said according to a plan, a schema, of prior and posterior application; and what is called by priority "a being" is secondary in the goodness schema, while what is called by priority "something good" is secondary in the being schema. Here is how St. Thomas puts it:

... since 'a being' says 'something properly is actually', and 'actuality' properly expresses order to possibility, according to this is something unqualifiedly called 'a being', according to the factor by which it is *first* distinguished from that which is merely a possibility. But this [factor] is the substantial act of being of each thing; hence, it is by virtue of its substantial act of being that each thing is unqualifiedly called 'a being'. But in function of acts of being added on over and above that, something is said, in a qualified sense, to 'be': as 'being white' is 'being' in a qualified sense, for 'being white' does not do away with being a possibility (said unqualifiedly), since it [being white] is added to the thing already existing actually.

But 'something good' expresses the notion of the perfect, which is the object of appetite, and consequently it expresses the notion of the *last* [or ultimate]. Hence, that which is perfect in an ultimate way is unqualifiedly called 'something good'. That which does not have the ultimate perfection that it ought to have, though it has some perfection to the extent that it *is, actually*, nevertheless is not unqualifiedly called 'perfect', nor unqualifiedly 'something good', but in a qualified sense.

Thus, therefore, according to the first act of being, the substantial act, something is unqualifiedly called 'a being' and in a qualified sense 'something good', i.e. to the extent that it is a being; but according to the ultimate act [of being], something is qualifiedly called 'a being' and unqualifiedly 'something good'...³¹

This picture, in which goodnesses are seen as actualities added to the thing, might mislead the imagination into merely considering the added-on character, the way we think of whiteness as a superficial addition. We should make the effort to consider that the good thing is the *complete* thing, and goodnesses are not just *any* added forms, but those which constitute the very *completeness* of the complete. Thus, for example, the adult stage of the animal, when reproductive capacity is fully on the scene, is an *improved* condition of the animal. The fertile animal is more appropriately called 'something good' than is the animal prior to attaining to the reproductive condition. Fertility is a more suitable instance of goodness than being is.

Among the articles of q. 5, on the good in general, the one to which we mean to give our main attention is a. 4. Up to the end of a. 3, St. Thomas is dealing with the relations between goodness and being, being, one might say, constituting a quasi-genus to which the good belongs as a quasi-species³². In this pattern of

31. *ST* I, q. 5, a. 1, *ad* 1. All translations of St. Thomas are our own, as well as italics and inverted commas in his texts.

For the general remarks we made on the interrelation of being and goodness, cf. *ibid.*, aa. 1-3.

32. A. 3, in showing that goodness is co-extensive with being, shows that we do not have here a true genus-species relation.

presentation, a. 4 gives us the "specific difference" and so provides the most quidditative portrait of the good³³.

In the questionnaire constituting the prologue to the whole of q. 5, St. Thomas expresses the query pertaining to a. 4 in this way: "To which [type of] cause is the notion of the good to be reduced?" The article itself takes the definite position that the good has the intelligibility: final cause. And this is not surprising to the reader, since St. Thomas has already constantly insisted on the relation to appetite expressed by "something good". Yet the form which the discussion takes may surprise. Here it is:

Since the good is what all seek, and that has the intelligible character: end [or goal], it is manifest that 'something good' conveys the meaning: 'end'.

But nevertheless the notion of the good presupposes the notion of the *efficient* cause and the notion of the *formal* cause. For we see that that which is first in causing is last in the thing which is caused: for fire warms previously to communicating the form of fire, whereas warmth in fire follows upon the substantial form. Now, in causing, first is found the good and the end, which moves the efficient cause; secondly, the action of the efficient cause, which moves [something] towards form; thirdly comes the form. Hence, the converse must be the case in the thing caused: first is the very form, by which it is a being; secondly is considered in it [sc. the form] the effective power, according to which it is perfect in being (because each thing is then perfect, when it can produce something like itself: as the Philosopher says in *Meteor.* IV); thirdly, the intelligible character: the good, is in attendance, by virtue of which perfection is poured forth in [the theatre of] being³⁴.

This article has some puzzling features. The lesson it aims to teach is that, while evidently the notion of final causality is united in the most intimate way with the notion of the good, nevertheless the *notion* of the good *presupposes* the *notions* of efficient and formal cause.

33. We remind the reader that our whole discussion concerns "the good" in the sense of the *goal* of appetite, as distinguished from the good as *the useful*. A useful thing is called "good" because of its role in the attainment of some *end*. It is thus an essentially *subordinate* good, subordinate to the end, the thing loved for its own intrinsic character. It is the good in the sense of the end that we are discussing. Cf. *ST* I, q. 5, a. 6.

34. *ST* I, q. 5, a. 4. The last part of the text reads: "... *tertio consequitur ratio boni, per quam in ente perfectio fundatur.*" We have taken "*fundatur*" as a form of the verb: "*fundo, fudi, fusum*", rather than as a part of "*fundo, -avi, -atum.*"

Our reasons are: (1) the idea of the good as the *foundation* of perfections is doctrinally odd (though, if pushed, one could defend it by reference to St. Thomas's explanation of "*fundamentum*" at *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 8, *ad* 2); (2) the "*fundo, fudi, fusum*" vocabulary is repeatedly used by St. Thomas, when it comes to expressing the proper causality of the good; cf. above, no. 30; also *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, c. 37, para. 5, and III, c. 24, para. 7.

As we have been able to find no manuscript evidence for anything other than "*fundatur*", we read it as a subjunctive, in a relative clause of causal character, the causality being formal (understanding, one might say, an "*ut*" or "*utpote*" before "*per quam*").

A difficulty for this reading is the "*in*" with the ablative: "*in ente*". We suggest: "in the *theatre* of being" to overcome this.

Cajetan, in his commentary *ad loc.* (cf. S. Thomae *Opera Omnia*, t. IV, Rome 1887: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S. C. De Propaganda Fidei, p. 62, para. X), understands "*fundo, -avi, -atum*".

Now, this should mean that one cannot even *think* of the good without thinking of the efficient and formal causes. In a way, this is nothing new in the *ST* treatise, since at a. 2 the question was posed: is "something good" prior in notion to "a being", and the answer was: no, "a being" is prior in notion to "something good". I.e. the notion "a being" is included in the very notion of "something good". And in the reply to an objection it was said:

'A being'... does not convey the disposition of a cause, *except* the formal cause only, either inhering or exemplar...³⁵

Still, we are troubled by St. Thomas's use, in a. 4, of the expressions: "*notion* of the efficient cause" and "*notion* of the formal cause", saying that the notion of the good presupposes these notions. St. Thomas has already said, in a. 2, *ad* 1:

... 'something good', since it has the intelligibility: object of appetite, conveys the disposition of the final cause, whose causality comes first, since the agent does not actuate except for an end, and by the agent the matter is moved towards form; thus it is said that the end is the cause of causes. And so, in causing, 'something good' is prior to 'a being', as the end is prior to the form; and for this reason, among the names signifying the divine causality, 'something good' is given priority over 'a being'.

Thus, we see here that, to the extent that the notion: *cause*, enters in directly, to that extent the sequence of *intelligibilities* is reversed. The primary order of intelligibility, the absolute order, puts "a being" first, and everything else follows according to its adding further notes to the notion of "a being". The introduction of the special notion: "cause" sets up a particular or special current of intelligibility, and in this current, just as end comes before agent and agent before form, so also good comes before perfect and perfect before being.

Now in a. 4, we are clearly in the context of the very same doctrine, the primacy in causing of final causality. Yet here we are told that the notion of the good presupposes the notions of efficient and formal cause. St. Thomas cannot mean that the notion of efficient cause, *precisely qua cause*, is prior in intelligibility to the notion of *final cause*. He must rather mean that the notion of the good (or final cause) presupposes the notions of *that which is the efficient cause* and *that which is the formal cause* (he means the beings as beings, not the causes as causes)³⁶.

Let us recall the position of a. 4 in St. Thomas's questionnaire. He is no longer merely discussing the *meaning of the word*: "good". Nor is he speaking of the quasi-generic nature of goodness, i.e. its coinciding with being. Here in a. 4, he is aiming to present the full intelligible portrait of the essence of goodness. He wants to display the *thing*, viz. *goodness*, in its *specific being*. He does this by calling our attention to the *proper subject* of goodness, i.e. that *in which* it is right at home, the *entitative setting* proper to it³⁷.

35. *ST* I, q. 5, a. 2, *ad* 2.

36. Cajetan systematically substitutes "*in essendo*" for "*in causato*", i.e. "in being" for "in the effect". Cf. *ed. cit.*, p. 62, para. IV-IX.

37. Cf. *De potentia* q. 7, a. 2, *ad* 9: "... in the definition of forms, the proper matters [or subjects] are used in place of the [specific] difference, as when one says that the soul is the actuality of the natural organized body..."

And this reading is borne out by the argument used. The "presupposition" which St. Thomas wants to display, he displays not in the causes *qua* causes, but in the *effect*, in the thing caused. The priority is not a priority of causes *qua* causes.

Let us then review this portrait of the good. First comes *form*, by which a thing is *a being*. We cannot have the good, nor can we think the good, without having and thinking the entitative character of the thing, e.g. its being a bird or a fish. Secondly, we have the *form as including the reproductive capacity*; this is not exactly the *agent qua agent*, but the *entity of the agent*:³⁸ thus, it is significant that St. Thomas says one must consider the form's effective *power* (*virtus*), according to which it is perfect *in being*. "Perfect in being" indicates that we are following the entitative vision of the thing, the line of absolute intelligibility; "power" goes along with the citation of Aristotle to the effect that the thing *can* reproduce (we are speaking of the potentiality)³⁹. The point is that for the good to be or to be conceived, one must consider the form as principle of being and as principle of reproductive capability. Then, lastly, one comes to the intelligible character: the good, by virtue of which *perfection flows* in the domain of being. Here, the idea seems to be that the product, the caused thing, has itself reached full causal status, i.e. is *actually causing* cause. With the arrival of the good, cause as such begins to enter our notions.

Form and agent, as beings, enter into the reality and the very notion of the good as such. Only as cause does the good precede the notions of agent and form.

What is to be underlined here is the "birth" of the concept of goodness. As soon as one sees being, and sees that it has the capacity to reproduce its like, one sees the goodness of that being, i.e. that it *invites* reproduction ("invite" expressing the function of the object of appetite). The good is form precisely as attended upon by inclination to reproduce⁴⁰.

We can imagine this doctrine in terms of the human being, as a reproducible animal. We start with a view of the human being as a being; we then consider the capacity which is present for reproduction, and we come thirdly to our vision of man *as inciting us* to reproduce. For the male, the picture of the animal as reproducible is typically completed in the female, so that for the male she is a kind of scope for the vision of the good. Or let us say it is mother and child (the mother appearing as a mother). The good is best seen in the vision of the family, indeed the family in which the children are reaching maturity.

38. Or we could say that "agent *qua* agent" is ambiguous. If it means capacity, i.e. having all that it takes for action, being "one step away" from action (cf. St. THOMAS, *In Metaph.*, lib. IX, lect. vi, Ed. Cathala #1834-8, *re* Aristotle, c. 7, 1049a3-18), then we are indeed speaking about the agent as agent. We are speaking about the *proper subject* of final causality. Thus, St. Thomas calls the *end* "the object, and, as it were, the *form* of the will": *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 8 (and the will is the primary instance of agency: *ibid.*, I, q. 19, a. 5, "*primo*").

On "cause" sometimes signifying the capacity, sometimes the actually causing cause, cf. St. Thomas, *In Physicorum*, lib. II, lect. vi, Ed. Maggiolo, #191-5, where the "cause", unqualifiedly, seems to be the actually causing cause: cf. 194 [8].

39. Cajetan treats "perfect in being" the way we have done. Cf. *ed. cit.*, p. 62, para. X.

40. "Form" here is shorthand; it is as subject and principle of being actually (*esse*) that form is being viewed. Cf. *ST* I, q. 19, a. 1.

One should not identify the notion of the good with the notion of the reproducible animal (or animal having the capacity to reproduce). The good is not precisely caught sight of except *as attended upon by inclination*. It is seen in the reproducible animal *as inciting us to reproduce*. The person who has caught sight of the good is easy to identify. He is typically shouting: "More! More! Encore!"

All this means that the efficient cause is the place to look for the good, because it is the place to look for *finality*. The *end* is, as it were, the form of the operating efficient cause.⁴¹ The agent is essentially "with a view to the end".⁴²

This doctrine has considerable importance for St. Thomas. Thus, in studying God, he has presented first, in q. 3, the divine being; secondly, in q. 4, the divine perfection (including a. 3, on whether anything can be *like* God, since capacity to produce one's likeness is the property of the *perfect*); and thirdly, with qq. 5-6, he comes to God's goodness.

With these considerations in mind, we will find ourselves more at home in q. 6, wherein St. Thomas discusses God's goodness, and where, as we said earlier, he puts such emphasis on the efficient cause. We shall see that this emphasis exists alongside, and indeed in perfect harmony with, the doctrine of the good as final cause.

The Good Which Is God

ST I, q. 6, a. 1 asks: whether it belongs to God to be good. This is an article with remarkably few parallels in St. Thomas's writings. The argument "*sed contra*", presenting the scriptural affirmation of God's goodness, cites *Lamentations* 3: 25:

Yahweh is good to those who trust him, to the soul that searches for him.⁴³

Perhaps the reason this is selected, from among so many possible texts, is that it includes the references to appetitive movements towards God on the part of creatures.

41. Cf. above, n. 38.

42. ST I-II, q. 1, a. 2.

Kevin P. Keane, in his article: "Why Creation? Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas on God as Creative Good" (*Downside Review* 93 (1975), pp. 100-121), attempted (p. 101) to present St. Thomas as saying that the reason the good God creates a good universe is merely that every agent produces something like itself ("*omne agens agit sibi simile*"): "... the decision to create has nothing directly to do with the divine goodness..." Keane is in error. For St. Thomas, that every agent produces something like itself is subordinate as a causal principle to "every agent acts for an end" ("*omne agens agit propter finem*"). This is the meaning of the order: (1) end, (2) agent, (3) form, in causal priority.

For St. Thomas, God is genuinely the *final* cause of all things. In intending to communicate his own goodness, he intends both the communication (likeness) and the goodness, but the causal order dictates that goodness is intelligibly prior to communication. Cf. ST I, q. 44, a. 4 (including *ad* 4).

43. *The Jerusalem Bible* transl. (London, 1966: Darton, Longman & Todd).

The only formally parallel passage for ST I, q. 6, a. 1 is *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, c. 37. There, St. Thomas uses the same *Lamentations* text, together with *Ps.* 73 (Vulgate 72), 1. On the other hand, q. 6, a. 3, that it is proper to God to be good by virtue of his essence, has many parallels.

Here is St. Thomas's argument for the goodness of God:

... to be good belongs especially to God. For a type of thing is good according as it is an object of appetite. But each thing has appetite for its own proper perfection. But the perfection and form of the effect is some likeness of the agent: for every agent actuates something like itself. Therefore, the very agent itself is an object of appetite, and has the intelligible character: the good; for this is what is sought after in its regard, that its likeness be participated in. Therefore, since God is the first effective cause of all things, it is evident that to him belongs the intelligible character of the good, of the object of appetite. Thus, Dionysius, in the book *On the Divine Names*, attributes 'good' to God as to the first efficient cause, saying 'that God is called "good" as that whence all things subsist'.⁴⁴

What is to be noted here is the way *efficient* causality is made to show God as good, and that for the very reason that the good is the object of appetite, i.e. the *final* cause. The efficient cause, as such, must be lovable (an object of appetite). The effects of efficient causes, in loving their own perfections, are in fact loving the agent: since the perfections found in the effects are likenesses of the perfections of the agent.

St. Thomas is here speaking of the efficient cause, taken in all its formality of cause: i.e. as the accompaniment of the *end as such* (the principle of all causality); the end as such is its very form.⁴⁵ If one wishes to *reason to* the goodness of God, then God's efficient causality is the perfect middle term, since it is, as it were, the proper "effect", or the immediate formal sequel, of God's goodness. This is arguing *a posteriori*. The distance traversed in the reasoning is absolutely minimal.⁴⁶

St. Thomas's reasoning is so compact and summary here that we beg to expand on one point. It is said that in loving its own perfection, the effect is in fact loving the likeness of the agent, and thus is loving the agent. One might be forgiven for thinking that this is "loving the agent" is a most indirect, remote, and even *incidental* way. Is it not as if someone were to say that I love person "A" on the sole grounds that I love person "B", who is often mistaken for person "A"?

The fundamental reply to this is that "likeness to the agent" is no mere accident in the production of things. One sees this point made briefly by St. Thomas in answer to an objection, in which the objector is attempting to show that, precisely because God is the first *efficient* cause of all, he *cannot* be the *final* cause of all. The objector argues that since the form of the thing generated and the generating agent are necessarily numerically distinct beings, and since the form of the thing generated is the very goal or end of generation, therefore the end of generation cannot coincide with the generating agent. God being the primary agent can thus hardly be the goal of all things. St. Thomas replies:

44. *ST* I, q. 6, a. 1.

45. Cf. n. 38.

46. Cf. St. THOMAS, *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*, q. vi, a. 2 (qu. 3, ad 1), ed. B. Decker, Leiden, 1959: Brill, p. 212, lines 26–30; metaphysics or divine science is said to "proceed intellectually", not because it does not employ reasoning, but because its reasoning is closest to intellectual intuition, because its principles are so close to its conclusions.

... the form of the generated thing is the goal of generation only precisely inasmuch as it is the likeness of the form of the generating agent, which intends to communicate its own likeness. If this were not the case, the form of the thing generated would be more noble than the one generating, since the end is more noble than the things which are ordered to the end.⁴⁷

From this, we see how even in loving its own perfection, the effect as such is being carried beyond itself, is in fact loving the agent.⁴⁸

The importance of an article aiming to establish the appropriateness of calling God "good" hardly needs confirmation. However, confirmation of the centrality of the argument therein contained is provided in the next article, on God as the Supreme Good (*Summum Bonum*). There the argument uses as its basis what we have just seen established:

For it is in this way that 'good' is predicated of God, as has been said, [namely] inasmuch as all desired perfections flow from him as from a first cause. But they do not flow from him as from an univocal *agent*... but as from an *agent* which does not agree with its effects according to specific nature or [even] according to generic nature...⁴⁹

Once again, it is quite clear that the goodness of God, i.e. his being an end, is being seen precisely in function of his being the agent whence all perfections flow.

Lastly, let us note a statement in the final article of q. 6, wherein St. Thomas discusses the validity of the formula: all things are good in function of the divine goodness. St. Thomas maintains that each creature has its own proper goodness, in function of which it is called "good".⁵⁰ Nevertheless he points out that Plato and Aristotle are in agreement that there exists a being which is by essence a being and good. And in what has something of the character of a climax for the whole discussion of God's being, perfection, and goodness (i.e. qq. 3-6), he concludes:

From the first, therefore, by his own essence Being and Good, each thing can be called 'good' and 'a being', inasmuch as they participate in him, by way of a certain assimilation, though admittedly remotely and in a deficient way... Therefore, in this way, each thing is called 'good' in function of the divine *goodness*, as the first *exemplary*, *efficient* and *final* principle of goodness entire...⁵¹

47. *ST* I, q. 44, a. 4, *ad* 2.

48. A really adequate discussion of this matter would include reference to the essentially hierarchical character of the cause-effect relation (cf. e.g. *ST* I, q. 46, a. 2, *ad* 7; *ibid.*, q. 104, a. 1); and reference to the essentially *tendential* ontology of the effect as an effect (cf. e.g. *ibid.*, q. 44, a. 4: "The goal of the agent and of the patient, precisely as such, is identical, but in diverse ways: for that is one and the same which the agent *intends* to impress and which the patient *intends* to receive."); and reference to the multiplicity of levels of the cause-effect hierarchy (cf. e.g. *ibid.*, q. 104, a. 1; *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, c. 24, para. 7).

The understanding of any goodness involves seeing it as a participation in higher goodnesses, and ultimately in the divine goodness (*ST* I, q. 65, a. 2; q. 60, a. 5).

All generation is an effort to share in the divine perpetual being, in the divine perfection (St. Thomas, *In Aristotelis De anima*, lib. II, lect. vii, ed. Pirotta, Rome/Turin, 1959: Marietti, #315).

49. *ST* I, q. 6, a. 2. Our italics.

50. *Ibid.*, a. 4. Cf. also q. 65, a. 2: "... each [type of] creature exists for the sake of its own proper act and perfection".

51. *ST* I, q. 6, a. 4.

This is in entire agreement with St. Thomas's way of speaking throughout the question. The end is the cause of causes. The agent *qua* agent is good, because the end is the form of the agent *qua* agent.

Conclusion

Fr. Peghaire thought that in locating the appropriateness of the Incarnation in the nature of God, as the essence of goodness, St. Thomas must be speaking of an agent's productivity. He concluded that St. Thomas was speaking in a secondary, *per accidens* way. In fact, however, even if one interpret *ST* III, q. 1, a. 1 as speaking directly about efficient causality (and it is far less explicit in this respect than many of the texts we have seen), it repeats the doctrine of the good proposed by St. Thomas throughout his career.

Like Plato, St. Thomas recognized that among causes, the good is "in the knowable, the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort..."⁵² Accordingly, he constantly leads the reader to the good through its proper and immediate attendant, the efficient cause. This is anything but an association of *incidentally* united items, anything but a purely accidental unity. Just as the good is identified as form attended by *inclination*, so is it identified as form attended by *efficient cause* or by *will*. In short, all discourse about the good must include the agent, but as an *attendant*.⁵³

Asked about St. Augustine's saying: "Because God is good, we exist", St. Thomas first explained the word: "good" in this saying by referring it to "good will". Thus, because God has good will, we exist. Clearly, at this point in his explanation we are still at the level of the efficient cause. But he then points out that the object of the will is the *end*, and that thus the statement is traced to the causality of the end, the final cause.⁵⁴ Just so might one take the statement in the *Timaeus*, that the Craftsman was *not jealous*. This means he had good will. And it is the mark of good will that it acts for the best.

52. Cf. above, n. 6.

53. Cf. *ST* I, q. 80, a. 1: "Some sort of inclination accompanies every form whatsoever". Cf. q. 19, aa. 1 and 2.

In a subsequent paper, we intend to discuss the metaphysics of inclination, as applied to God's creative causality.

54. *Ibid.*, q. 5, a. 4, *ad* 3.